

# Gator Times



## WELCOME HOME NASARG!



# Gator Times



## LHA 4

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On The Cover:  
Gator Times' End of Deployment Edition  
Illustration by MC3(SW) Chris Williamson



## Captain's Call

Capt. Samuel Norton  
Commanding Officer  
USS Nassau (LHA 4)



Nassau is finally home, wrapping up one of the more demanding deployments in her 31 year history. The record of 159 consecutive days at sea is not likely to be matched again in the near future.

From providing humanitarian assistance in Haiti, to executing counter-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa and engaging with navies across the AFRICOM, CENTCOM and EUCOM areas of responsibility, Nassau set a high standard for those who follow.

None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the patience and support of our families and friends at home. Thank you for all you've done to make this deployment easier and our return home one of the top events of the year for all of us.

One of the highlights of our homecoming was the Tiger Cruise. Nearly 500 friends and family members joined us for the trip from Morehead City, N.C., to Norfolk, enjoying an early reunion and taking the opportunity to share a little of what life at sea is like for

## CMC Corner

Shipmates, Nassau Family and Friends,

It's hard to believe the deployment is finally at an end. The past seven months have been interesting and busy, beginning with a rewarding humanitarian relief effort in Haiti. We then headed to the 5th Fleet area of operations and executed 159 consecutive days at sea, matching the modern day record set by the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) in 2002. Our sailors and Marines finished up with port visits to the Seychelles and Civitavecchia, Italy, before heading home.

Many Sailors took advantage of the time to earn their warfare qualifications – we now have 460 new Surface Warriors and 427 new Air Warriors. Another 323 Sailors completed NCPACE college courses and academic skills classes provided onboard or through distance learning.

Now we've returned to Norfolk and we prepare to enjoy some well-deserved relaxation time. I ask everyone to keep safety in mind. If you're traveling, remember you haven't driven in seven months. If trav-

their Sailor or Marine. In addition to tours of the ship and other events, we had a special Cinema at Sea movie viewing in the Hangar Bay.

Now that we're home we can take a little time to catch our breath and recharge our batteries, but we can't forget about business – the rest of the Navy is still working full-time. The next big events on the calendar are the September rating exams, which begin during our Post Overseas Movement period. I encourage all of our test takers to keep the full court press on to be prepared for the big day.

Finally, though there is some uncertainty due to proposed legislation, Nassau is still on the list for decommissioning early next year. There is a lot of work to be done. The ship has served proudly for more than three decades and she deserves the best care we can give her. Regardless of whether the decision is to decommission Nassau or for her to continue service in the fleet, we have to maintain the ship and keep her in the proper condition. We will soon be conducting an inspection to assess the ship's material and readiness conditions (INSURV) to help us prepare for decommissioning or continued service. It is going to take a steady strain to be ready for this comprehensive assessment and whatever the future holds.

Again thanks for all that you do.

CMDM(AW/SW) Stan Kopiczak

eling long distance, you'll likely find yourself more tired than you expect. Plan ahead and don't push yourself to do it all in one day. For hitting the water with your boat or jet ski, or hopping on your motorcycle, I ask you to take it slow and take time to shake off the rust.

If you plan on working on that "Honey Do" list, be cautious with power tools or motorized equipment. Double-check everything and remember to follow all the safety precautions. Our goal is to have everyone come back safe and sound.

In closing, I'd like to congratulate our Sailors on an extremely successful deployment and thank you for being professionals over the past seven months. I'd also like to thank our Ombudsman and our Family Readiness Group for everything they did for our families while we were gone. Last but not least, a special thank you to all of Nassau's Family and Friends for the wonderful support and prayers during our deployment. Enjoy having your Sailors back!

# Nassau Sailors and Marines Tour Pompeii

Story & photos by MC2 Patrick Gordon  
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Sailors and Marines from USS Nassau (LHA 4) visited Pompeii, Italy, on a Morale, Welfare and Recreation tour July 29. The Nassau personnel toured the archeological site of the city where Mount Vesuvius erupted and blanketed the city in volcanic ash and mud in 79 A.D.

The tour wandered through the ancient streets where buildings, fountains and statues were preserved until excavations began in the 18th century.

"One of the houses still had frescos on the wall," said Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class (AW) Randy Smelser, of Hollywood, Fla. "It was really neat to see something that old look like it was painted yesterday."

The Sailors and Marines got a glimpse in to everyday life in Pompeii before the eruption, seeing shops, bakeries, and houses where average citizens lived their lives.

"The tour was so informative and breathtaking," said Yeoman 3rd Class Lejoine Gardner, of Valdosta, Ga. "I really loved how the tour guide explained the daily lives and culture of the Pompeian people."

Afterwards the tour enjoyed local cuisine and shopping. Vendors explained the processes of creating cameos from seashells, bronze jewelry making, and distilling lemon liqueur. At the end of the day, the Sailors and Marines returned to Nassau with a greater sense of Italian history.



Sailors and Marines tour an excavated bath house.



Information Systems Technician 2nd (SW) Tammy Pinkard, of St. Louis, views the ruins in Pompeii, Italy. Thirty Eight Sailors and Marines from USS Nassau (LHA 4) visited the archeological site.

# Seven Months Underway: Done!

Story MC3(SW) Chris Williamson  
USS Nassau Public Affairs

USS Nassau (LHA 4) Sailor's friends and family members poured through Naval Station Norfolk's gates Aug. 15 as Nassau pulled into homeport after safely completing a seven month deployment to the 5th and 6th Fleet Areas of Responsibility.

Nassau departed Norfolk on Jan. 18 as a part of the Nassau Amphibious Ready Group (NAS ARG) comprised of USS Nassau (LHA 4) along with USS Mesa Verde (LPD 19), USS Ashland (LSD 48), and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (24 MEU).

Not long after departing, NAS ARG received orders to divert from their intended path to lend a helping hand in Operation Unified Response, the joint humanitarian aid/disaster relief mission to Haiti. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen, made the decision based on the urgent need for assistance in Haiti following a devastating earthquake Jan. 12. NAS ARG arrived in Haiti Jan. 23 and immediately began providing assistance.

While off the coast of Haiti, NAS ARG provided helicopter and amphibious landing craft support providing meals, water, and medical supplies. The medical personnel and facilities aboard all three ships combined medical assets to treat 16 critically injured patients. Additionally, 24 MEU medical personnel treated more than 100 Haitians on the island of Gonave.

"Thanks to the expeditionary capabilities of the NAS ARG with the embarked 24 MEU we were able to help the government of Haiti, UN, and international relief workers mitigate the immediate impact of the earthquake on communities both near and further away from the epicenter," said Fraser.

After departing Haiti on Feb. 7, NAS ARG continued with its original deployment to the U.S. 5th Fleet Area of Responsibility (AOR) to conduct theater security cooperation missions and to serve as 5th Fleet's Theater Reserve.

"When we started this deployment back in January, we had no idea that we would be supporting such a vast array of missions," said NAS ARG Commander Capt. John Bruening. "But that is what makes the NAS ARG so valuable to the maritime strategy. We are a flexible, scalable force that can adapt and support any mission on a short notice. This deployment was a success because we did that from day one."

Nassau transited the Strait of Gibraltar Feb. 19 and was followed by Mesa Verde and Ashland the next day. One week later, NAS ARG went through the Suez Canal and then relieved USS Bonhomme Richard and 11 MEU on March 1.

After assuming the naval mission in 5th Fleet, NAS ARG and 24 MEU conducted sustainment operations, executed maritime strategy and security operations (MSO) and theater security cooperation (TSC). The 5th Fleet AOR encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water and includes the Arabian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, and parts of the Indian Ocean.

NAS ARG and 24 MEU was the second ARG/MEU to deploy with the MV-22B Osprey. The Ospreys are a versatile medium-lift aircraft that can fly and hover like a helicopter, or tilt its wing-mounted propellers forward to fly like an airplane. All together, Nassau safely executed more than 3,800 flight operations hours.

Nassau received her first liberty port after 159 consecutive days at sea. On June 25, Nassau anchored off the coast of Mahe Island in the Seychelles island chain. Sailors and Marines enjoyed some well-deserved time off and participated in numerous community relations (COMRELS) with local schools and orphanages.

Nassau returned to the 5th Fleet AOR after departing the Seychelles and was shortly thereafter relieved by USS Peleliu (LHA 5).

"The work that the Sailors aboard Nassau did during the deployment was phenomenal," said USS Nassau's Commanding Officer Capt. Samuel Norton. "I'm extremely proud and fortunate to be a part of a team made up of the type of young men and women whose commitment to professionalism and getting the job done right the first time attitude is the daily standard."

On July 22 Nassau went back through the Suez Canal and into the 6th Fleet AOR. During that time, Nassau arrived in her second liberty port in Civitavecchia, Italy on July 26.

"Done" continued on page 10



USS Nassau (LHA 4) Sailors prepare to man the rails. Photo by MC3(SW) Chris Williamson



The Il Vittoriano in Rome, Italy. Photo by MC1(SW) James Stilipec



Sailors and Marines aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) observe the ship's transit through the Suez Canal as it draws near the Friendship Bridge. Photo by MC3(SW) Chris Williamson



Two Sailors work together to get boxes of food off the boat and delivered to the people of Haiti during Operation Unified Response. Photo by MC3 Desiree Green



USS Nassau (LHA 4) spends 159 days underway. Photo by MC2 Patrick Gordon



Ensign Amy S. Sullivan takes a lesson in traditional Seychellois dancing at the Kaz Kreol restaurant in Mahe, Seychelles. Photo by MC3 Desiree Green

# ITALY



**The Colisseum**



**The Trevi Fountain**



**The Cathedral of San Giovanni**



**St. Peter's  
Basilica**



# USS Nassau Paints the Town in Civitavecchia



Sailors from the USS Nassau (LHA 4) pose for a photo in front of the bleachers they painted as part of a community relations project in the city of Civitavecchia, Italy.

Story & photos by MC3 Desiree Green  
USS Nassau Public Affairs

Sailors aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) participated in community relations (COMREL) while on a port visit in Civitavecchia, Italy.

"Not only does it feel good to help but we get to see a part of the country that we wouldn't have taken the time to see otherwise," said Logistics Specialist 2nd Class (SW/AW) Daniel J. Shelton from El Paso, Texas. "This is a great way to really experience the country."

The crew of more than 30 Sailors spent half the day painting two schools and a stadium in the beautiful Italian town about 30 miles from Rome.

"I like doing COMRELS," said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class (SW/AW) Benjamin M. Wyatt from Midwest City, Okla. "I've been doing them since Corps school. It's also nice to know that you can come back with your children and show them what you've done."

Many locals came out to watch and thank the crew including the town mayor. After completion of the work, the crew enjoyed an intimate dinner hosted by the representative for the Navy League Rome, Laila Volpe.

"It is amazing what they have done here," said Volpe. "I am grateful that they took time out to do such a wonderful and complete job and I am honored to show my appreciation to them with an authentic Italian meal. They deserve it after all of their hard work for our town."



Yeoman 1st Class (SW/AW) Damarion T. Nelson paints a stadium railing during a community relations project held in the city of Civitavecchia, Italy.

## Chaplain's Corner



Chaplain's Corner provided by USS Nassau  
Command Religious Programs

After seven plus months we made it home from workups and an arduous deployment to the Middle East. All throughout the deployment I marveled at your high level of motivation and morale. Each one of us, including myself, positively managed combat operational stress over the past year. Stress does not have to wear us down, burn us out, or cause us harm. Life is stress, would you like to do more than simply survive, would you like to know how to thrive on stress?

Psychological stress is the internal tension, strain, or pressure experienced and appraised by an individual along a continuum of stressors from benign to traumatic as a person interacts with their environment. Everyone reacts to stress. Responses to stressors can be physical, mental, emotional, behavioral, social and spiritual. How you appraise stressors will determine your response to stress.

You can learn to respond to stress positively. We call this adaptive approached oriented coping. Coping is the cognitive and emotive process, strategy and style an individual utilizes to appraise and adapt to stress. Many individuals utilize mal-adaptive coping such as denial, self-medication with alcohol and drugs, or other negative and destructive attitudes and actions such as verbal abuse, cutting on the themselves, or domestic violence.

Negative mal-adaptive coping can be prevented if you learn to respond positively to stress. Here are some positive stress reducing skills you can learn: relaxation, deep breathing, or mediation through positive visualization. I believe a healthy lifestyle is the key to stress reduction and management which involves a good diet, lots of water, plenty of exercise, sleep and if you drink alcohol, do so safely and in moderation.

If you are having difficulty managing life's stressor stop by the Chaplains office, go to medical and talk with the SMO or a Corpsman, the Fleet and Family Service Center has many free resources or check out Military One Source.



Master Chief kicked over a trash can. Master Chief is feeling the effects of stress. Master Chief should speak with USS Nassau's (LHA 4) Hospital Corpsman, a chaplain, or Fleet and Family Service Center.  
Photo by MCSN (SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau.

### Done," from page 4

Sailors and Marines again participated in COMRELS and also enjoyed such locations as Pompeii, Florence, Naples, and Rome.

After her short stay in 6th Fleet, Nassau went back through the Strait of Gibraltar on Aug. 2 and reentered the 2nd Fleet AOR. During the time in 2nd Fleet before returning home, NAS ARG disembarked the 24 MEU and took on more than 400 of Nassau crewmember's friends and family for a quick overnight tiger cruise back to home-port.

"By no means was this deployment a normal one for any of us, especially with 159 days at sea without a port visit," said Norton. "The support from the families and friends at home were essential to making our time at sea a success."

# COMMAND ACHIEVEMENTS



## ESWS Qualified

AOAN Brad Gray	CS2 Stan Allen	EMFN Kamalley Nolberto	CS3 Chelon Gibson
AOAN Juan Caceres	CS3 Craig Maley	MASN Edward Bacon	AOAN Terrika Fields
AO3 Matthew Bahner	CS2 Herbert Myers	CS3 Isaac Cooper	ABHAN James Spencer
AOAN Hector Meza	CSSN Antonio McCoy	OS3 Jeffrey Boeh	ABHAN Sylvester Williams
AO3 Darian McKinney	CSSN Zachary Paradis	AO2 Gretchen Handlos	ABF3 Adrian Amolo
AO1 John Reed	CSSN Jeffery Wright	HM3 Adam Hinchliff	ABF3 George C. Miller
AOAN Coleman Jones	AOAA Brandon Bolton	HM3 Justin Wyszynski	ABH3 Etaund Hill
CS3 Candace Selig	OSSA Kibum Lee	HM3 Gregory Rochelle	ABFAN Luis Smith
CSSN Robert Stone	MMFN Brent Tilley	HM3 Dustin Hamaker	AN Yazmin Leon
CSSN Kendrick Hollis	MMFN Raul Sierra	RP2 Ademola Junaid	LS3 Dodji Koutche
CSSN Taylor Donovan	FN Ana Vazquez	OS3 Brian Fuell	CS3 Brandon Whitney
CSSN Rodolfo Elston	EM2 Jeffery Briggs	DC2 Kurt Wiesemes	CS3 Michael Griffin
LS3 Michael Brooks	HT2 Ryan Visage	LS3 April Luckett	



## EAWS Qualified

IT2 Tammy Pinkard	MA3 Jamell McEachern	AOAN Bryant Davis
OS3 Christopher Collins	IS3 Emily Hunt	AZAN Eric Brimley
OS3 Aaron Hooks	IS2 Michael Nelson	AO2 Randy Smelser
IT3 Matthew Broughton	IS2 Richard Taft	AO2 Lance Whitacre
AG2 Roy Jimerson	OS3 Justin Thomas	HM2 Jane Nonthaveth
AGAN Justin Fields	LSSA Luis Murguta	AT3 Lance Downing
IS3 Addidas Doby	AEAN Matthew Collins	IS2 Sean Hayes
MA2 Elizabeth Luna	AO3 Joshua Wheaton	ENFA Antonio Hopkins
IS2 Anthony Corbo	IS2 Nicholas Lowenborg	CTR2 Nathan Plackemeier
ISSN Steven Spires	AOAN Joshua Gilmore	CTR3 Brandon Dunn
IS2 Ana Rivas		AOAN Lawrence Taylor
AG2 James Mullins		HM1 James Carbone
IS2 Kalie Sharpe		

